

Claims:

- sub 1*
1. An electronic mail client, comprising:
- a) a mail handling component for sending and receiving electronic mail; and
 - b) an authoring/reading component for creating electronic mail messages and for reading electronic mail messages,
said authoring/reading component having at least two modes of authoring,
said modes being selectable by said authoring/reading component when creating an electronic mail message, wherein
each mode causes the electronic mail message to be displayed in a different manner when read by the authoring/reading component.
2. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, wherein:
said two modes are selected from the group consisting of customer and vendor, teacher and student, auctioneer and bidder, and doctor and patient.
3. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, wherein:
the mode of a message is encoded in the message and determined by the authoring/reading component when the message is created.

4. An electronic mail client according to claim 3, wherein:
the mode of a message is encoded as a MIME-type.
5. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, wherein:
a message created in a first of said two modes allows a recipient of the message to use a first set of tools to respond to the message, and
a message created in a second of said two modes allows a recipient of the message to use a second set of tools to respond to the message, said first set of tools and said second set of tools being different from each other.
6. An electronic mail client according to claim 1, wherein:
a message created in a first of said two modes allows a recipient of the message to see all of the information contained in the message, and
a message created in a second of said two modes allows a recipient of the message to see a only subset of the information contained in the message.

a message created in a first of said two modes allows a recipient of the message to see the information contained in the message organized in the same way it appeared during creation of the message, and

8. An electronic mail system, /comprising:

b) a second electronic mail client having a second authoring/reading component for creating and reading electronic mail messages, wherein

said first authoring/reading component creates messages in a first mode and said second authoring/reading component reads messages in a second mode, each mode causing messages to be displayed in a different manner.

9. An electronic mail system according to claim 8, wherein:

said first and second modes are selected from the group consisting of customer and vendor, teacher and student, auctioneer and bidder, and doctor and patient.

10. An electronic mail system according to claim 8, wherein:

the mode of displaying a message is encoded in the message by the first authoring/reading component and determined by the second authoring/reading component when the message is read.

11. An electronic mail system according to claim 8, wherein:

a message displayed in said first mode allows a viewer of the message to use a first set of tools to create the message, and

a message displayed in said mode allows a view of the message to use a second set of tools to respond to the message, said first set of tools and said second set of tools being different from each other.

12. An electronic mail system according to claim 8, wherein:

a message viewed in said first mode allows the viewer of the message to see all of the information contained in the message, and

a message created in said second mode allows the viewer of the message to see only a subset of the information contained in the message.

13. An electronic mail system according to claim 8, wherein:

a message viewed in said first mode allows a viewer of the message to see the information contained in the message organized one way, and

a message viewed in said second mode only allows the recipient to see the information organized in a second way different from said first way.

14. An electronic mail client, comprising:

a) a plurality of authoring/reading components for creating and viewing representations of information;

b) encoding means for automatically encoding representations created with said authoring/reading components into an Internet-compatible email message; and

c) decoding means for automatically decoding said representations encoded by said encoding means, wherein

at least one of said authoring/reading components is responsive to a role mode encoded in an email message whereby said role mode determines how information in said email message will be displayed.

15. An electronic mail client according to claim 14, wherein:

said role modes are selected from the group consisting of customer and vendor, teacher and student, auctioneer and bidder, and doctor and patient.

16. An electronic mail client according to claim 14, wherein:

a message encoded with a first role mode allows a recipient of the message to use a first set of tools to respond to the message, and

a message encoded with a second role mode allows a recipient of the message to use a second set of tools to respond to the message, said first set of tools and said second set of tools being different from each other.

17. An electronic mail client according to claim 14, wherein:

a message encoded with a first role mode allows a recipient of the message to see all of the information contained in the message, and

a message encoded with a second role mode allows a recipient of the message to see a only subset of the information contained in the message.

18. An electronic mail client according to claim 14, wherein:

a message encoded with a first role mode allows a recipient of the message to see the information contained in the message organized in the same way it appeared during creation of the message, and

a message encoded with a second role mode prevents a recipient of the message from seeing the information contained in the message organized in the same way it appeared during creation of the message, and only allows the recipient to see the information organized in a different way.

19. An electronic mail client, comprising:

a) a main email component for sending and receiving messages;
and

b) a plurality of installable authoring/reading components for creating and reading messages, wherein

said main email component communicates with said authoring/reading components through a bidirectional application programming interface.

20. An electronic mail client according to claim 19, wherein:

said application programming interface provides at least one function call to said main email client by an authoring/reading component selected from the group consisting of get message, send message, save message, pass message, get registered users, enable button, disable button, and kill component.

21. An electronic mail client according to claim 20, wherein:

said application programming interface provides at least one function call to an authoring/reading component by said main email client selected from the group consisting of close window, get component info, initialize window, send message, open message, reply message, clear message, print message.

22. A method of corresponding by electronic mail, comprising:

- a) creating a representation of information;
- b) encoding the representation into an Internet-compatible email message;
- c) sending the email message to an email client; and
- d) decoding the email message at the email client, wherein the email client is responsive to a role mode encoded in the email message whereby the role mode determines how information in said email message will be displayed.

23. A method according to claim 22, wherein:

the role mode is selected from the group consisting of customer and vendor, teacher and student, auctioneer and bidder, and doctor and patient.

24. A method according to claim 22, wherein:

the role mode of a message is encoded as a MIME-type.

25. A method according to claim 22, wherein:

the role mode determines what tools may be used by the email client to view the representation of information.

26. A method according to claim 25, wherein:

the role mode determines what tools may be used by the email client to respond to the message.

27. A method according to claim 22, wherein:

the role mode determines how much of the representation of information can be viewed by the email client.